

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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DRAFTED BY ARA/AND/B - MR. PACE:LEE
APPROVED BY SCA - RTHENNEMEYER
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, BL

SUBJECT: AMERICAN PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA: PARENTS' MEETING
WITH SCA

1. THREE PARENTS OF AMERICAN PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA MET WITH
SCA ACTING ADMINISTRATOR HENNEMEYER ON MARCH 25 TO DISCUSS
SITUATION OF THEIR CHILDREN. PARENTS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY
CHRIS STEED OF SENATOR TOWER'S OFFICE.

2. DR. WILLIAM FARMER OPENED THE MEETING BY NOTING PARENTS
HAD HOPED TO MEET WITH SCA ADMINISTRATOR DESIGNATE BARBARA
WATSON. PARENTS HOPE AND EXPECT THEY WILL MEET WITH HER
DURING THEIR NEXT TRIP TO WASHINGTON. PARENTS REQUESTED
STATUS REPORT ON SITUATION IN BOLIVIA. HENNEMEYER EX-
PLAINED FUNCTIONS OF SCA BUREAU, REVIEWED RECENT DEVELOP-
MENTS IN BOLIVIA AND ANSWERED QUESTIONS REGARDING ROLE OF
NEWLY-HIRED EMBASSY ATTORNEY AND INTERPRETER.

3. DR. FARMER URGED DEPARTMENT TO DEVISE IMAGINATIVE IDEAS
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FOR RESOLVING PRISONER ISSUE, MENTIONING POSSIBILITY THAT
PARENTS COULD HIRE LAWYER TO BACK UP INDIVIDUAL PRISONER
COUNSEL. IN RESPONSE, HENNEMEYER SAID THERE IS NO US
MISSION THAT HAS DONE MORE THAN EMBASSY LA PAZ TO CONTACT
ALL RELEVANT PERSONS REGARDING PRISONERS' SITUATION.

EMBASSY LA PAZ HAS BEEN IMAGINATIVE IN USING ALL POSSIBLE

CONTACTS TO SPEED MOVEMENT OF PRISONER CASES. HENNEMEYER ALSO NOTED THAT SCA ORIGINATED THE CONCEPT OF EMBASSY-HIRED LAWYERS, AND RECENTLY PRESENTED BUDGETARY PROPOSALS TO CONGRESS FOR DIETARY AND MEDICAL SUPPORT TO PRISONERS WHERE THIS IS NEEDED. REGARDING IDEA OF HIRING "WATCH-DOG" ATTORNEY TO SUPERVISE WORK OF OTHER PRISONER COUNSEL, HE CAUTIONED THAT ORIGINAL PRISONER ATTORNEYS MIGHT RESENT SUCH INTERFERENCE. WE WOULD HAVE TO FIND OUT IF THE BOLIVIAN LEGAL SYSTEM ALLOWS FOR SUCH A "FRIEND OF THE COURT" ROLE FOR AN OUTSIDE ATTORNEY NOT DEFENDING AN INDIVIDUAL PRISONER.

4. PRISONER PARENT BLUM STATED THAT AMERICAN PRISONERS IN BOLIVIA ARE SHOWPIECES, WHOSE IMPRISONMENT IS NOT JUSTIFIED. HE SAID ALL OF THE PARENTS WANT THEIR CHILDREN HOME WHILE THEY ARE STILL POTENTIALLY SALVAGABLE. MORE URGENCY IS REQUIRED. HENNEMEYER STATED THAT WE APPEAR TO BE ON THE VERGE OF REAL PROGRESS. HOWEVER, OUR ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE MAY DIFFER FROM THAT OF THE PARENTS. THE US GOVERNMENT'S WORLDWIDE POLICY IS TO SEEK JUSTICE FOR US CITIZEN PRISONERS. IN BOLIVIA, THIS MAY RESULT IN SOME RELEASES AFTER TRIAL, BUT OTHER PRISONERS MAY RECEIVE PRISON SENTENCES. OBVIOUSLY, THE PARENTS SEEK RELEASE OF ALL AS THEIR OBJECTIVE.

5. DR. FARMER STATED THAT, IN BOLIVIA, JUSTICE FOR THE FOREIGNER TRADITIONALLY MEANT RELEASE AND DEPORTATION. BOLIVIA'S SYSTEM OF JUSTICE PRESUPPOSES ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FAMILY. THE US GOVERNMENT HAS DISCOURAGED

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DEPORTATION AS A SOLUTION IN CASES OF US CITIZENS DETAINED ON NARCOTICS CHARGES. BY HIRING AN ATTORNEY, THE US EMBASSY IS THUS COMPENSATING FOR THE LACK OF A FAMILY PRESENCE. DR. FARMER ADDED THAT IT WAS NOT SATISFACTORY, FROM THE PARENTS' VIEWPOINT, FOR THE US GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE SPEAKING OF JUSTICE FOR THE PRISONERS WHEN THE PARENTS REQUIRE RELEASE AS THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THEIR CHILDRENS' CASES.

6. DR. FARMER ASKED IF IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO PRINT AND DISTRIBUTE A WEEKLY PRECIS OF DEVELOPMENTS ON THE PRISONER ISSUE. DEPTOFFS NOTED PRIVACY ACT RESTRICTIONS, CLASSIFICATION OF SOME CABLE TRAFFIC ON PRISONER DEVELOPMENTS AND SENSITIVE NATURE OF MANY CONTACTS WITH BOLIVIAN OFFICIALS. HENNEMEYER SAID DEPARTMENT WOULD REVIEW AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND RELEASE DATA OF A GENERAL FACTUAL NATURE. IF POSSIBLE, THE DEPARTMENT WOULD RELEASE "NEWS ITEMS" TO THE PARENTS.

HOWEVER, THE PARENTS MUST REALIZE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS WORKING ON THIS MATTER ARE ALL VERY BUSY PEOPLE; TIME SPENT WORKING ON SUCH A REPORT WOULD BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THEIR EFFORTS TO ASSIST THE PRISONERS.

7. DR. FARMER ASSERTED THAT SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AMONG THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN RECENT YEARS WILL INEVITABLY HAVE AN IMPACT UPON US GOVERNMENT POLICY. THUS, CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARD DRUG CONTROL QUESTIONS WILL IMPACT ON CURRENT USG POLICIES REGARDING PROTECTION OF AMERICAN CITIZEN PRISONERS OVERSEAS. HENNEMEYER STATED THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN OUR DRUG CONTROL EFFORTS AND OUR PROTECTION AND WELFARE ACTIONS ON BEHALF OF IMPRISONED US CITIZENS. CHRISTOPHER

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